

NATIONAL OCEANIC ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANN MOLLOY
FOR THE
VOICES ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
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Molly Graham: This an oral history interview with Ann Molloy. The interview is taking place on October 16, 2019, in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The interviewer is Molly Graham. We'll start at the beginning. Could you say when and where you were born?

Ann Molloy: I was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on February 13, 1965.

MG: Tell me about your family history and how they came to Gloucester.

AM: My family is all Sicilian on both sides. They came to Gloucester because they were fishermen over there. So they came to Gloucester because it was a big fishing port here.

MG: Do you know what generation immigrated over first?

AM: My grandparents. Three out of four of my grandparents were born in Sicily. The one that wasn't was born in the north end of Boston right after her parents had just got here from Sicily. That was in the early 1900s that everybody immigrated here.

MG: Did your grandparents' families know each other?

AM: I don't think so. I could be wrong, but not that I know of.

MG: Did they come straight to Gloucester?

AM: My dad's family came in through Ellis Island, got as far as Garfield, New Jersey, where my dad was born, and then came to Gloucester. On my mother's side of the family, they went to Boston. Then my grandfather, on my mother's side, went to Lawrence and they worked in the mills for a very short time, and then came to Gloucester.

MG: Did they have family that was established here and helped bring them over and get them settled?

AM: Not really. They were the first. After that, they became that for others that came, but I do believe they were the first.

MG: Have you heard stories from your parents or grandparents about what fishing was like in Italy?

AM: They went over across the Mediterranean into Africa, stayed there, and fished in the Mediterranean sea. It was a lot of smaller boats, smaller fish, very primitive back in the day.

MG: Was it hard to transition to fishing here in Gloucester?

AM: Well, fishing here in Gloucester back in the day was very primitive, too, still. It was very small boats that start out with very small boats. My grandfather was in Boston, fishing in small boats. Actually, my grandfather on my mother's side was in Boston already when my grandfather came as a boy; he came first. Then he was fishing. When my grandfather came –

his name was Leo Linquata. He came, and he remembers being a small child and still having a memory of his grandfather meeting the ship on his fishing boat, and looking down and seeing his father waving and smiling to him as they came in the harbor. So he was fishing there. I forgot about that when I said that earlier that my grandfather was first generation. His father had come just a little bit before him. Then they came to Gloucester, and they were fishing in very small little wooden boats. They were fishing right in the harbor. Then my grandfather, as he got older, started going out on the schooners. He would send letters to my grandmother, which were great letters. He couldn't go to give them to her because back in the day, you didn't date. Everything was arranged still. So he would send the letters with my grandmother's cousin, and he would sneak them to her. That's how they courted. We have all those letters still to this day – they're fantastic – from all the different [locations]. One would be mailed from Coney Island and different fishing ports down the East Coast as he was out on these huge schooners.

MG: Was that the grandfather on your mother's side or your father's side?

AM: My mother's side.

MG: Remind me of his name.

AM: Leo or Leonard Linquata, L-I-N-Q-U-A-T-A.

MG: What was the name of your grandfather on your father's side?

AM: Salvatore Parco, P-A-R-C-O.

MG: That name is familiar to me. I know there are a number of Parcos still in Gloucester.

AM: Yes. We had a decent-sized family, all stemming from my grandfather and grandmother, and some cousins and things like that. We're all related. If that's their last name, we're a hundred percent related, same with Linquata.

MG: I'm curious about how your parents met.

AM: My parents met at the St. Peter's Club in Gloucester, which started – I can tell you how that started, too. That was for the fishermen. They went to a dance. The story goes, they danced with others throughout the night, but then once the two of them danced together, neither one ever danced with anybody else.

MG: Can you talk about the difference between the kind of fishing your father's generation did and the fishing your grandfather's generation did?

AM: My grandfather started out on real small wooden boats with a cast net. Then went on schooners. My father, when he started, it was more eastern rigged boats. They would do seining, and they would go for mackerel and different things. Sometimes they didn't even have to leave the harbor, but then they started going offshore for seven to ten-day trips. Then the

boats turned to the steel boats, stern trawlers. But by that point, I think he was done fishing and had started his seafood company.

MG: When would that have been?

AM: He stopped fishing in the late '50s, I want to say. Maybe even younger. Maybe early '50s. My brother was very young. There's five kids in the family, and my oldest brother started calling my grandfather "dad," which really aggravated my father because he's saying, "I'm going out fishing, killing myself for ten days at a time, sleeping four hours a day, and I come home, and my son is calling my father-in-law 'dad.'" So he said, "I got to get a shore job." That's when he went into the seafood business. He started out with Carlo Ciaramitaro at a plant called – it was a fishing company called Morning Star Fisheries. It's where the Coast Guard Station is now. During urban renewal, the City of Gloucester took that by eminent domain, for the Coast Guard station. Carlo went and started Star Fisheries, and my father went and started Ocean Crest Seafoods, which is still operating today. He bought that building from my grandfather, Leo Linquata; he had been running Progressive Fish Company there, and he was selling fuel oil to the fishing boats. He realized he was making more money selling fuel oil to the boats than I am fish. When my father, his son-in-law, said, "I need a fish company. Do you have any recommendations?" He said, "I'll sell you my wharf, and I'm going to go into the home heating business." So he started Progressive Oil Company and sold Progressive to my father. That was in 1965. My father and my uncle, Ed McCollum, bought that together and changed it to Ocean Crest Seafoods. That was the year I was born.

MG: I want to ask you all about that, but you said something earlier about the history of the St. Peter's Club. I didn't want to miss hearing more about that.

AM: My grandfather had Progressive Seafood Company. There were several other producers in Gloucester that were unloading the fishing boats. They wanted to put money together and get a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. The fishermen were going to put in, say, five percent of their catch, and then my grandfather was going to match it, and other seafood operators would match it. They'd take that money to hire a lobbyist. Well, that all sounded great, and it started going along, and they had this fund set up. Then some of the fishermen would say, "Hey, this guy didn't put in his five percent. Why am I putting in my five percent if this guy's not putting in his five percent." They all started arguing over it. The whole thing fell apart, but they had this money still. So they took the money, and they bought the St. Peter's Club as a place that all the fishermen could meet, and that's how the St. Peter's Club started.

MG: Is it still there today?

AM: Yes.

MG: I was also curious if you had any family members who served in World War I or II?

AM: My father absolutely served in World War II. He volunteered and went in early so that he could pick the Navy because he was always on the water, and that's where he wanted to go. He

was seventeen. He climbed the ranks really fast and became a tugboat captain. He would take boats through the Panama Canal to San Francisco.

MG: Oh, wow. What was the purpose of transporting the ships? Was he taking them to get recommissioned?

AM: I don't know. I'm not positive. My mother, if you interview her later, might know.

MG: Okay. You mentioned something about the Coast Guard taking over the business property through eminent domain. How does that work? What did that mean?

AM: They took a lot of properties that were on the waterfront, down by where the Fitz Hugh Lane House is now. They got rid of a lot of warehouses on the water, and homes that were in that area, and they widened Rogers Street, so tractor-trailers can come in and out. They built freezers because there was a lot of frozen fish at the time. Through that process, they took that property along with a lot of others, by eminent domain, and that's where they put the Coast Guard station. It's prime real estate, and they definitely didn't get the value of it. This was called urban renewal.

MG: Did that have a big impact on the businesses and homes in that area at the time?

AM: Absolutely. It changed the whole look of Gloucester. It aggravated a lot of people. If you know the poetry of Charles Olson, he wrote a lot about that. That's another interesting subject to look up, Charles Olson and all his poems about the transformation of Gloucester and losing its soul to the corporate system. But yes, that was a big huge change for Gloucester, which a lot of people did not like at all.

MG: When would that have been?

AM: That was in the early '60s because it was '65 when [my father] moved over and started Ocean Crest, which is down the Fort.

MG: Where did the name Progressive come from for your grandfather's business?

AM: So it was during the Depression when he started Progressive Seafood Company, and the banker said to him, "My, Leo, you're very progressive starting a seafood company in the middle of the Depression." So he called it Progressive Seafood Company.

MG: How did he fare during the Depression?

AM: He was amazing. He had a sixth, seventh, maybe eighth-grade education tops, and English was his second language. Not only did he start Progressive Fish company then Progressive Oil, he started other businesses – the Gloucester House Restaurant – and he loaned money to people. He helped immigrants from Sicily and Italy get their citizenship here. He put people through college. He was a huge entrepreneur and an extremely bright man with common sense and a real hard work ethic. He did it all from nothing, let's say. Really, so did my dad. I think he had a

sixth, maybe seventh, eighth – tops – grade education also. Through a lot of hard work, ambition, and drive, he ended up being extremely successful also.

MG: Do you remember your grandfather? Did you get to know him?

AM: Yes. My grandparents on my mom's side, absolutely. My grandmother on my dad's side passed away before I was born. My grandfather on my dad's side passed away when I was three months old. So I have no memories of the Parco grandparents, but I have a lot of memories of the Linquata grandparents. I grew up right down the street from them. They babysat for me all the time. I went over there all the time. My son was born in 1991, and he has memories of them both. So, yes, we were all very close to them. Every Sunday, we had spaghetti, pasta, (*bista?*), as we say in Sicilian. The whole family would go every Sunday, and they babysat for me on Saturday nights. I'd watch Lawrence Welk with them, [laughter] eat chocolate ice cream. So, yes, I do have many, many memories of them.

MG: That's so nice. It's great to have so many family traditions be carried on.

AM: Yes, my father had the ambition and the guts, really, to start Neptune's Harvest fertilizer division in the early '80s, which takes the byproducts from the seafood industry and turns them into organic fertilizer. So we still have that company going and the seafood company.

MG: What went into the decision for your grandfather to transition from seafood processing to the heating oil?

AM: Basically, he was making a lot more money selling the fuel oil to the fishing boats than he was fish, and my dad needed a wharf, so he said, "Go into business with your brother-in-law. I'll get two of my daughters well taken care of in the deal, and I'll even make more money selling my fuel oil to homes instead of just fishing boats.

MG: What were the early years of Ocean Crest like for your father and his brother-in-law?

AM: They had the Seven Seas brand whiting, and they sold to grocery stores. The salad dressing people actually had to buy the name Seven Seas from them when they went into that. So they did a lot of whiting and redfish, and they had a huge amount of packers; all the women were fish cutters and fish packers because the men went fishing, and the women stayed home and cut the fish and packed the fish. He had a lot of employees back in the day. We did thousands and thousands of pounds of fish.

MG: Can you talk about how that business has evolved over time? How has it changed?

AM: I remember my dad saying, "We used to make five cents a pound on fish, and we made a lot more money than years later, making twenty-five cents a pound because it was all so much volume." As the volume went down, the price went up. That's really the biggest change. Then the variety of seafood – we went into shellfish and other things more than whiting and redfish and started doing all sorts of groundfish, haddock, cod, hake, cusk, flounder, pollock – a lot of pollock in the '80s. The fisheries have always fluctuated a little bit, ebbed and flowed in the

stocks, and also the species that were being caught. But it always seemed like there was one thing that was being brought in heavy for a run. Then redfish stopped coming in at all for years, and now it's back big-time. So things just go into cycles, obviously natural cycles.

MG: How are you tracking these changes? Is it what you're seeing being unloaded, or some other way?

AM: No, it's basically what we see being unloaded. We got our finger on the pulse because we're right there on the dock watching all the fish come in off the boats every day. We used to have more boats, of course, and each boat brought in way more fish. I mean, one boat could bring in eighty to one hundred thousand pounds of fish per trip. Now you're lucky if you get that many pounds in a week with several boats.

MG: Can you talk about those changes? What led to the decline? When did you notice fewer fish were coming in?

AM: Well, there were a lot of factory ships allowed. Then they started with the two-hundred-mile limit, and that really helped that because the factory ships were just wiping everything out. It was never our small boat fleet that could ever do damage to how many fish are in the ocean. But when they were allowing those big off-shore huge trawlers from other countries to come in, they really did huge damage to the fishery. So I think that was the biggest thing that declined the yield. After that, things really came back beautifully and were doing extremely well. Then the government restrictions have been what's been really hurting the industry and making things extremely difficult for us ever since. The other thing we're noticing now is fish that used to just be off of the coast of New Jersey and New York are starting to come up here. I believe that has got to do with the warming waters.

MG: Can you talk more about that? What are the impacts of climate change that you're seeing?

AM: Well, sea levels are definitely rising. One hundred year storms are every two or three years now. I've seen the ocean water coming up higher in our plant. Ocean Crest Seafoods is built off over the water. Most of our plant is on stilts there on the water, pilings. You used to see, every once in a blue moon, the floor of the plant underwater. Now it's more and more common all the time. The last nor'easter or the (for'easter?) we had a few years ago or last year maybe, two years ago, you saw a huge amount of ocean water coming right up Commercial Street, which is the main road in and out of the Fort. I've never seen that in my life. So definitely things are changing that way. Then, we have a lot more squid here. We have a lot more sharks and seals here than we've ever seen. Things like tilefish and other types of fish that you never saw up here are pretty common now.

MG: How are folks adapting? How is the business adapting?

AM: Well, we went into the fertilizer business to utilize a hundred percent of the fish because making a living off of the fillet, which is thirty to forty percent was getting impossible. We're just selling new different kinds of fish, trying to get people to try more underutilized species, things like that.

MG: For the fillets?

AM: Yes.

MG: Let's back up a little bit and talk about when Neptune's Harvest was founded.

AM: Neptune's started in the early '80s. There was a plant in Gloucester called the "DeHyde," and they took all the fish remains and made pet food; they dehydrated it. That's why it was called the "DeHyde." They sold pet food. But they were really a smelly operation. People with more and more money started moving into East Gloucester, and they did not like the smell. So they got them shut down. This was in the '80s when we were producing a huge amount of fish. So we were forced to pay fishermen to take the gurry, the fish remains – we call it gurry – out to sea, and dump it, which was very expensive. It was bad for the environment because it was creating a "dead zone" where they dumped it. As it decomposed, it sucked the oxygen out of the water. So it was bad for the environment. It was very expensive to pay fishermen to take it and dump it, and it was extremely wasteful. We knew it made great fertilizer because all the Italian fishermen had the best tomatoes in the city from burying it in their gardens. And the Indians did it. My dad and uncle at the time were approached by the City of Gloucester. They were trying to figure out a way to utilize all this gurry. They came to them with this idea, and they had the guts to go forward. It was very ambitious of them, at the time, to try something that was so unknown. They got together with the University of Massachusetts Marine Station at Hodgkin's Cove in Lanesville. For free, basically, just trying to help commerce in Gloucester, helped us develop the process to turn it into fertilizer. It was probably ten years and a million dollars of trial and error before we really got something that was right that we were proud of and could sell. Then in the late '80s, we started selling it to farmers only in bulk. Then in the early '90s, we started bottling it for retail, so that homeowners could use it also.

MG: How old were you when Neptune's Harvest was founded?

AM: I graduated high school in '82. Then I graduated from college in '87. When I came back here, we had just started doing it. My dad wanted me to be a bookkeeper for the company, and I had no desire to be a bookkeeper, but then when he went into organic fertilizer, I was like, "Okay, this is something I can really get behind." So I came on board. Then my son was born in '91, and I was working for the company at the time. Then when he was real little, I used to take him around in the car with a bottle of Neptune's Harvest fish fertilizer and go to every garden center in New England that I could drive to in a day. We would just pick a different area every day. I would get in the car, and I'd lug him around to all these different garden centers with my little bottle of fish fertilizer trying to get people to try it.

MG: Can you back up a little bit and tell me about your education? Where did you go to college?

AM: I did two years at Green Mountain College in Vermont. Then I did two-and-a-half, almost three in Colorado at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. I graduated from

Gloucester High School, and I did something called Semester at Sea, where you actually get on a boat and travel around the world. I went to twelve different countries in the spring of '86.

MG: Had you traveled much before that?

AM: I toured with the Grateful Dead every summer for years, and sold t-shirts all summer long across the United States. But I had not done any international travel like that until that point.

MG: Well, tell me about touring with the Grateful Dead first, and then you can tell me about your international travels.

AM: The first concert I ever saw I was fourteen or maybe fifteen; it was 1979, and it was the Grateful Dead in Springfield, Mass. It changed my life. I was addicted from day one to that music. It just hit me in the soul like nothing ever did before, and I haven't been the same since. So then I just started going to local shows in Boston and Providence and Springfield and Worcester. Then when I went to school in Vermont, we'd do little mini-tours and go to Portland and Syracuse, and all the way down to Nassau Coliseum in Long Island. We'd travel as much as possible. We'd even go back to school and go to class, and then leave for another show sometimes. But I did that for a couple of years. Then when I went to school in Colorado, all summer long we'd print t-shirts before we left, and then we'd just go four, five, six of us in a van or a truck or whatever we were traveling with at the time, and we would just see every single show on the whole tour and sell t-shirts along the way.

MG: Was that in an official capacity for the band?

AM: No, not official. I was an art major in college, so I would do all the artwork. My friend worked at a screen shop, so he would get the shirts for sixty-two cents each. Then he had a four-color press that we traveled with, in a coffin, and you'd just need somewhere to plug in, and we could print shirts on the road. He burned all the screens at his print shop he worked at. So we weren't into it for any money, except sixty-two cents a shirt, because we did all the work and the art and everything ourselves. So if we sold them for ten dollars, we were making pretty good money. You could sell ten shirts a night each, and we'd all have a hundred dollars in our pocket to get to the next show.

MG: [laughter] Do you have a favorite show that stands out to you?

AM: Cuyahoga Falls in Ohio in '85 was probably one real standout show. The Saratoga shows were always amazing in New York. I don't know. The New Year's Eve shows at the Kaiser [Center] in Oakland. Real bucket list item to get. I got a miracle ticket for a New Year's Eve show, which is really a miracle.

MG: What is a miracle ticket?

AM: They're sold out, and there's five thousand people looking for a ticket, and you get one. [laughter] Or, a miracle could be a free ticket. I got one from a guy from Gloucester while I was in California. He's like, "Ann, you in?" I'm like, "Not yet." He goes, "You are now."

MG: Oh, wow.

AM: [laughter] I know. So I got one right for cost. That was great. And the Greek Theatre and the Starlight Theatre in Kansas City, Missouri was a real epic venue. And Red Rocks [Park and Amphitheatre] is probably the best venue in the world. We got to see them there a few times. And Telluride – got to see them in Telluride, which was amazing.

MG: That is amazing.

AM: I could do a four-hour interview on just the Grateful Dead tour. [laughter]

MG: Did you ever get to meet or know the band?

AM: No. I did meet Brent Mydland, the keyboard player, in Chicago. I flew from Denver to Chicago to see the Dead, and I didn't even have tickets. They were playing a three-night run. I'm at a blues bar the night before, and my friend taps me on the shoulder and goes, "Ann, look who just walked in." I turn around; it's Brent Mydland sitting at the bar. He sees me look at him, and I had this big smile. So then he mimics me and does this big smile. So that made me smile ten times more. Then he mimicked me again. That kind of went on three times until I'm like, "All right, I'm going to leave him alone." I turned around, listened to the band. Then it was over, and we were leaving. He's still sitting at the bar. So I went over, and I talked to him. I told him I'd just flown in from Denver to see him. He goes, "Well, enjoy the show." I'm like, "Yeah. If I can get a ticket, I will." He goes, "You flew from Denver without a ticket?" I'm like, "Yeah." He gave me a big hug, and he pulled out a cocktail napkin. He asked the bartender for a pen. I'm like, "You want me to write my name?" He's like, "Yeah, that'd be a good start." So I wrote my name; I could hardly write. He wrinkles it up and puts it in his shirt pocket. I'm like, "He's going to wake up drunk tomorrow. He'll never find it. It's going to end up in the trash." But I went to the box office the next day to check. I had four free tickets waiting for me at will call. The next night, four free tickets waiting for me at will call. The next night, two free tickets waiting for me at will call. So he gave me ten free tickets for a three-night run, and it was amazing. [laughter]

MG: That is amazing. What was the last Grateful Dead show you ever saw? Do you remember?

AM: I had tickets when he passed away, actually. I missed that one. But it was probably the Boston Garden. I had a young son at that point, in the early '90s, so I wasn't touring by any stretch, but I did go to all the Boston shows. They'd do six-night runs, and I'd go to most of all of them. He passed away in '95. It was probably Boston Garden 1994 fall tour.

MG: You must have been devastated when he passed.

AM: I was. I felt like I knew him. I had to leave work. I cried like I knew him personally.

MG: I was young when that happened, but I remember seeing his poster everywhere.

AM: Yes.

MG: It was a big deal.

AM: We went to Hampton Beach that night to see RatDog, which was Bob Weir's – from the Grateful Dead – sideband. It turned into a big memorial service, basically.

MG: Are you following their work today with John Mayor in the band?

AM: I am. [laughter]

MG: How do you feel about that?

AM: I love it. Hey, anything that can keep the music going is all right with me. They tried many times and never quite hit it. This is the best cover band version of themselves that I've seen yet. John Mayor's amazing. He's a great guitar player. He does Jerry proud, I think. I think Jerry would be happy with it. I'm happy with it because I get to relive a little of it. I don't travel far, but I'll go to any local shows. I went to the ones at Fenway and Great Woods and Foxboro, the last one at Foxboro. Yes, I'm still – and I see all the offshoots, RatDog, Phil [Lesh] and Friends, any type of related bands. I love music, so I go to concerts all the time for all different kinds – bluegrass and a lot of music festivals. I go to Mexico to one called Strings and Sol, which is all jam-grass, which is Grateful Dead meets bluegrass. That's really staying alive with bands like Leftover Salmon and Infamous Stringdusters and Yonder Mountain String Band, Railroad Earth, Greensky Bluegrass, all those types of bands – Billy Strings. He's the new bluegrass phenom.

MG: I'll have to look him up.

AM: Definitely. [laughter]

MG: I meant to ask what brought you out to Colorado for the second half of your college education.

AM: So that's funny. I saw the movie *Jeremiah Johnson* when I was ten years old, and he talks about – there's a scene in there when they go, "The Rocky Mountains, the marrow of the earth." I always thought it was Colorado, so I always wanted to go to Colorado. So I went to Colorado. Years later, I was watching *Jeremiah Johnson*, and I was telling my friends that I was watching it with my whole story about why I went to Colorado. At the end of the movie, it's running the credits, and it says, "We'd like to thank the state of Utah and the Parks and Recreation Division." So I went to the whole wrong state, but that is why I went to Colorado. [laughter]

MG: [laughter] Remind me of the school you attended there.

AM: It was Green Mountain College – I'm sorry, that was Vermont. It was the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. I thought, "I'll go to Northern Colorado because the mountains

will be bigger,” [laughter] Boy, was I wrong. It was a really flat, cow town. The mountains in the brochure looked much closer in the picture. That brochure sucked in a lot of us. [laughter]

MG: [laughter] Did you graduate with an art degree?

AM: Yes. Fine arts degree, emphasis in pottery, which I never really used much, although I do the ads for the company, and I helped design the logo of our company.

MG: What were you hoping to do with the art degree? Did you plan on joining the family business?

AM: No, because I really didn't want to be a bookkeeper at all. I wanted to be an art teacher and maybe have a gallery, and just be an artist. I still do art on the side, but I don't sell it or anything. It's just a hobby.

MG: Where did you go when you finished college?

AM: Well, at that point, I came back here, which was '87. That's when the fertilizer started happening. So I came back to work for the family company.

MG: You wanted to get involved because it was a good mission, and it was organic fertilizer.

AM: Yes. I loved the whole organic idea. I just thought it'd be an interesting job and different every day. Bookkeeping was just way too monotonous. You finish one day. You come back in and start over again the exact same job every single day. I've never been able to do that. But my job now is different every day. I talk to farmers all over the country and really interesting people. I get to travel a lot for trade shows. So it's a much more fun job than being a bookkeeper, in my opinion.

MG: What was your first position?

AM: Well, I did accounts payable when I was really young, and just filing and things like that. I learned every aspect of that office. When the accounts receivable bookkeeper went on vacation, I did accounts receivable. I could do anything in the whole office. When I first came on, I basically got into sales and marketing and label registration, pretty much doing everything.

MG: Tell me how the company has grown and changed over time.

AM: We started with just the straight fish fertilizer, and then we went into fish and seaweed blend. Then straight liquid seaweed. Then we went into crab shell and lobster shell and then dry kelp meal. Then lawn starter, turf formula. Then more recently, we went into the tomato and veg and the rose and flowering geared towards cannabis growers because they want a veg formula and a flowering formula. But they're great standalone for vegetables and flowers. But that was the theory with that one. Now we're about to launch a brand new product which is the liquid crab and lobster shell. We've found a way to micronize the crab and lobster shell. Now we're selling a liquid crab and lobster shell. So it's got the calcium and the chitin, which helps

with insects and disease. So we're always constantly expanding the line. Then we have a bunch of farm products we sell, like humate, biological microbes, calcium concentrates, insect repellants like garlic and hot pepper wax, bug sprays made from cedar oil, natural bug sprays you can put on yourself and your pets. It keeps mosquitos and ticks and no-see-ums and all that stuff away. We just keep expanding all the time. We have several products now that we sell to farms and to retail.

MG: Can you describe the process? How does it go from the sea to the garden?

AM: Sure. So we unload the fishing boats. We fillet the fish. The fillet goes to the restaurants. The sixty to seventy percent leftover gets ground up. It goes through this big auger-looking thing the same day while it's still fresh, not stinky. It comes out looking like hamburger. Then it goes into these tanks, where these high-powered pumps whip it around. Along with the pumps and the enzymes in the fish that are naturally there, it breaks them down into a liquid within twenty-four hours. Then we stabilize it with phosphoric acid, which is something that plants need anyway is phosphorous, so it's a good stabilizer. It's approved organic as long as you just use enough to stabilize it. Then we screen it through a 150-micron screen, which looks like cloth because it's so fine. So it comes out looking like chocolate milk. The pH is 3.5. It has an indefinite shelf-life until you add water. So it comes out to be this liquid concentrate that you mix with quite a bit of water when you apply it.

MG: How are you doing your research and development? How are you learning about the techniques and science around this?

AM: It started with UMASS Marine Station, scientists there. Then we got some machinery from Norway, and there were some Norwegians that we actually flew over from there here that stayed here for several months and helped us set up the machinery. But then we completely changed it over the years. What we have now is nothing like the original. I don't even know if there's anything left of the original at this point because we just kept tweaking it and changing it and adapting it to our needs over the years.

MG: Are you able to say why it works so well?

MG: Well, with most chemical fertilizer, you've got your NPK, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and that's it. With the fish, you've got your macronutrients, which is NPK, plus micronutrients, trace elements, amino acids, vitamins, enzymes, minerals, growth hormones that are naturally in fish, plus all your omega oils. So the oils are a natural sticker spreader. All the nitrogen is in the form of amino acids, which is chelated, which means they can be absorbed by the plant the day that you apply it. It feeds the biological life of the soil, which increases beneficial bacteria, which will draw nitrogen from the atmosphere. It builds the sugar in the plants, which makes it less susceptible to insect damage and disease. Insects can't digest sugar, so they'll go to a weaker dying plant – nature's way of survival of the fittest. The weak ones get eaten; the strong ones thrive. It increases the relative feed value and the total digestible nutrients, so it makes really nutrient-dense food; everything tastes better because of the built nutritional value and the built sugars in the plant. It's a great deer repellent. Deer do not like the fish because they're vegetarian. So we sell it to farmers that could care less it's fertilizer, they could

care less it's organic. They just buy it for deer repellent. So it's got so much in it, and that's why it works so well. It really is amazing. We weren't geniuses. We weren't agronomists. We didn't know anything about the fertilizer business, but we sent samples out. Once people tried it, they're customers for life. They're telling everybody about it. We got all the giant pumpkin growers using it. The North American record was grown last year in New Hampshire. It was 2,528 pounds, and he used our fertilizer. Then the Topsfield Fair record this year in Massachusetts was 2294.5, grown by Alex Noel, and he used our products. He sent us a great testimonial saying, "I've used your product for years. I used more than ever this year, and this was my personal best and a new record for Topsfield Fair."

MG: This might sound like a stupid question. Does it have other uses besides fertilizer? Is it good for your hair, for example?

AM: One lady sent us a testimonial and said it grew her husband's hair back. He used it by mistake in the outdoor shower, and his hair grew back. But you can use it for animal feed. You can mix it in with your feed ration. Ten gallons per ton of feed. It makes a great addition to feed. So basically, it grows any plant, grass, anything – farm crops, hay and pasture. They love it because of the increased feed value. It's great for animal feed as well as fertilizer.

MG: I see that your shipping facility is here. Is the processing plant here?

AM: We manufacture it down the Fort at Ocean Crest Seafoods. That's where we make the fertilizer. Then we have a 4600-gallon tanker truck that brings it to farms all over the country, but he'll also fill up over there and bring it here. We're three miles [away] here in the Cape Ann Industrial Park now. Here we bottle it. We make all our specialty fertilizers here. All our warehouse storage is here. Now we have offices that don't stink. I get to come home not stinking every single day.

MG: Did you stink at one point?

AM: Oh, yes. I worked at the other building for years, and boy, everything stunk. As soon as you left, you'd have to take a shower and strip down.

MG: What changed?

AM: We moved buildings. The stink is still over at the other building. I just don't work there anymore. [laughter]

MG: Is the town satisfied? You mentioned this started because people were complaining about the smell.

AM: Yes, we're much better. As a matter of fact, when the *Gloucester Times* went over and interviewed some neighbors about us making fertilizer there, they said, "They're making fertilizer there?" Once in a while, you get a bad batch of gurry or something, and you'll stink up the neighborhood, and we'll get a few calls. But that's very rare. Very rare. Ninety-nine

percent of the time, it's contained because fresh fish doesn't stink. As long as you're grinding it and stabilizing it the same day, it's fine.

MG: I know this started because the City of Gloucester approached your father and said, "Hey, we got to figure out what to do with this gurry."

AM: Yes.

MG: Did they stay involved? What's the relationship with the city now?

AM: No, they did not stay involved. That was just a one-time introduction, and then the rest we did all on our own.

MG: I know that this is a really family-friendly organization. Most of the employees are cousins and relatives. Is that true?

AM: Yes. Out of forty-five employees, fifteen are family.

MG: That's nice.

AM: Yes.

MG: You mentioned your son was born in the early '90s. Tell me about starting your family.

AM: My son was born in '91, and he's twenty-eight years old now. He's worked here pretty much his whole life. He runs the warehouse now. He manufactures all our specialty products. He runs the bottling/labeling line. He loads the trucks, unloads trucks, keeps the inventory. He's worked his way up from unloading the fishing boats right on the dock to filling the fertilizer in the bottles. So he's moved his way up from the very bottom up to where he is now.

MG: And sales as an infant.

AM: Yes. He was at a trade show one time, where we were doing the Boston Spring Flower show. I couldn't find anyone to watch him, so I brought him with me. He sold a bottle – his claim to fame was he was eight years old, and he sold a bottle to a lady that didn't even have any plants. [laughter] She bought it for a friend that has a plant because she thought he was so cute.

MG: It sounds like you raised him on your own. Is that true?

AM: Yes. I was divorced from his dad when he was a year and a half, so I did.

MG: Another reason it's helpful to have family nearby. Did they help babysit, too?

AM: Oh, yes. When I got divorced, I moved in with my parents for three years, and they helped raise him big time while I saved money to get a down payment and buy my own house.

MG: That's a huge help.

AM: Definitely.

MG: Tell me about the work you're doing today or hope to do in the future here.

AM: Well, right now, we're expanding the line all the time. We're still selling to a lot of farmers. We've really jumped on the cannabis wagon. They've brought us along with it because it works so well. That is just skyrocketing. The hemp, we're selling a huge amount in bulk to hemp growers all over the country. We're really growing a lot, and just trying to keep expanding and adding more products and do as much as we can here.

MG: That's great. Is marijuana legal in Massachusetts?

AM: Yes. Medical and recreational, and hemp, in the new farm bill, was made legal for the whole country. I think there's sixteen – I may be wrong. There might be more now – states that have legal, medical, and at least five or six with recreational, and more all the time.

MG: You indicated on your survey that you wanted to talk about saving Gloucester's working waterfront. What did you want to say about that?

AM: Well, there's been a lot of gentrification over the years, a lot of big new money moving in, and certain people don't like the smell, the traffic, the noise. A lot of people would love to see condos and restaurants and hotels on the waterfront. We're a DPA, designated port area, here in Gloucester. The reason that was started was to protect the working waterfront. Yacht marinas and restaurants and hotels don't necessarily mix with working waterfronts starting at 3:30, 4:00 AM, trucks loading and unloading, the smells, the noises, the traffic. You get too many tourists in the area, and it can tip the tables. I love tourists, and we've always had tourism. Tourism's a huge part of our economy, so I'm not against it by any stretch, but too much can ruin it for the locals. Then you have really, really bad traffic nightmares. You end up with more and more complaints about your working waterfront. There's a tipping point, where all of a sudden it flips, and you're not going to be able to run your seafood company downtown anymore. That's really important to me. I don't want to see that happen. What makes Gloucester great is how authentic we are; blue-collar working people; really work hard, play hard mentality; a lot of artists, musicians, writers. We're built on a big huge chunk of granite, and there's a lot of energy. It's a very high energy spot. We've always attracted artists because of the energy, the lighting here. Artists need to be able to afford to live here. The people in the working waterfront need to afford to live here. The prices have just gone up, up, up like crazy. It's getting very hard for our kids to afford to live here. So I fight hard to keep our roots to what the true roots are. I don't mind people moving in here and adapting to what it is; they move here because they love it. What I hate is people that move here because they love it and then just want to change it. They want a Starbucks. They want this and that. Certain things don't fit in here. If you're going to move here, you should move here and adapt to us, not try to make us adapt to you and your new ways.

MG: What's your relationship been like with the fishermen of Gloucester?

AM: Awesome. They're my best buds. I used to be married to a fisherman. All my uncles were fishermen, both sides of the family. Fishermen and farmers are the same people. It's actually helped me immensely in my job because I go to these trade shows and deal with these farmers, and they're like dealing with my uncles. Their hands look the same. They can fix anything anywhere just like a fisherman because a fisherman at sea can't run down to the store and get a part. A farmer in the middle of thousands of acres can't run down to the store and get a part. They dress the exact same way. They look the same with their weathered faces. They're dependent on the weather. One farms the land and one farms the sea, but they're the exact same person. They always cry poor mouth the same, complaining about never making any money. They're the same people, and I love them to death. I can relate to them. They're salt of the earth, really good quality people.

MG: They're up against some of the same challenges in terms of climate change and government regulations.

AM: Absolutely. Yes, one hundred percent.

MG: Are you hearing from both farmers and fishermen about either of those topics?

AM: All the time. It's the number one problem.

MG: Which one?

AM: Well, both, but regulations more so. The weather's always been the same issues for hundreds and hundreds of years. You've always had ebbs and flows and extreme weather and things like that. That's enough of an issue to have to deal with. You don't mind restrictions because nobody wants to overfish and see everything end for our future generations, but they need to make sense. The regulations, a lot of time, are based on corporate greed and people with money influencing decision-makers. Then the guidelines and restrictions actually make things worse, not better. I'm not just talking about the fishermen and farmers, but for the land and the sea and the fish. You mess with your predator-prey ratio, you can really mess things up. We have so many seals here now because we had so many baby haddock and so many baby pollock and cod, that we really increased our seal population. Now we have sharks here. Seals eat more than any fishermen ever could take in, in a day, yet there's no restrictions on them. Fishermen are cute, too. [laughter]

MG: Was there a particular regulation that had a big impact on fisheries?

AM: Days at sea were better, I think. When they started to tell you how much you could bring in – say, five hundred pounds of cod a day. Well, when you take a fish from the ocean, and you drag it up in the net, it's dead. When it comes up, it gets the bends like a diver coming up too quick. So they're throwing away all these dead fish. That's not conservation. That's just wasteful. That's a sin, in my opinion. There's starving people on this earth, and you're throwing away dead fish? So, yes, there's definitely poor management practices that mess things up. It seems like they really had a concerted effort to put a lot of fishermen out of business.

MG: Have there been other things that have come down from high that have been frustrating for you or for fishermen?

AM: Well, the whole permit bank problem.

MG: Can you talk to me more about that?

AM: Well, it's almost impossible for a young fisherman to get involved now because you have to buy a boat, which is expensive to maintain, but then you have to buy quota. Nobody used to have to buy quota. You used to be able to just go out and fish. The ocean is the rights of the commons. It's in our Constitution. We're supposed to be able to fish. Then they're leasing the ocean now to stakeholders for rare and precious metals, windmills, pipelines, sand and gravel excavation, and they're taking our precious fisheries and ocean resource and permitting it out to the highest bidder. I don't think that's constitutional either, for one. For two, things are going to start happening out there that are going to ruin the fishing grounds. Fish is the best protein in the world. It's very nutritious for us. It even says in the Bible, the sea shall fill the land, and it can. But if you ruin it, it can't. So I'm very nervous about all this. Who knows what's going to happen with oil drilling. It wouldn't shock me if that changes, and they're going to allow that eventually. So it's really sad that they're allowing all this to happen out there and what we should be preserving for our fish.

MG: Yes, that sounds frustrating.

AM: It's a big food source, and the food is getting shorter as the world gets more populated. There's been a lot of studies showing there's going to be a big shortage of protein, so why would you mess with the best source in the world. I have, like I said, been around the world. Since I've been an adult, I've traveled to a lot of countries. I've had the seafood. I've seen the seafood all over the whole country. I firmly believe the best seafood in the world is the North Atlantic Ocean – the cold, clean, dark, mineral-rich North Atlantic Ocean. [laughter]

MG: [laughter] Well, talk to me about some of your travels. Where have you been? Where did you go when you did Semester at Sea?

AM: We left Fort Lauderdale. We crossed the Atlantic Ocean. We went in through the Strait of Gibraltar into Cadiz, Spain. Then we went to Piraeus, Greece. Then we went to Istanbul, Turkey. Then we went to Haifa, Israel. Then we were supposed to go to Egypt, and they blew up our hotel the night before we got there. I was sitting in Israel with my friend. I was having breakfast, looking at the paper. I said to her, "What's the name of the hotel we're staying at tonight?" She said, "Hotel Pyramids Giza." Frontpage: "On Fire Hotel Pyramids Giza." One more night, and we would have been there. It was the youth protesting the mandatory military draft. So we didn't go to Egypt, which I was very disappointed I didn't go see the pyramids. Anyway, then we went through the Suez Canal while [President Ronald] Reagan was bombing [Muammar] Gaddafi. We had to wait three days for passage. That was crazy. Then we went through the Suez Canal. Then we went to Bombay, India. Then we went to Sri Lanka. Then we crossed through the Indian Ocean. Then we went into – we cruised right by Singapore, but we didn't stop. You could see it; we were that close. Then we went into Hong Kong. From there,

we flew into Beijing for a China trip. Then we went to Taiwan, South Korea, and then Japan. Then we crossed the Pacific Ocean, and we went in through the Puget Sound and landed in Seattle. So literally around the world, three oceans.

MG: What an incredible experience to have at such a young age.

AM: It really was. Yes, absolutely.

MG: Any stories stand out to you, besides your hotel being bombed?

AM: That was a big one. Going through the Suez Canal just watching – we had a crew from Turkey come on board, and bring the boat through the canal, and just watching them all work together with these huge ropes. It was like this amazing kinetic sculpture moving through there, looking at both sides of the canal and the desert. That was pretty interesting. I remember crossing the Atlantic. At some point, prior to getting five or six days out, we were getting closer and closer to Spain. We saw all these dolphins in the wake of the boat, playing in our wake. Actually, off the bow of the boat, the little waves that come off the bow of the boat. All sorts of fish. I saw swordfish and all these different fish. We saw all these crazy things that you'd never imagine. [laughter]

MG: How did you get this experience?

AM: I had a teacher. I was an art major like I said, and I had an art teacher at the University of Northern Colorado that had gone on the boat as a teacher. So he was always trying to talk us all into going. My parents told me if you want to study abroad for a semester, you can. But I could never pick a place I wanted to go. Then when this came around – first, they kept saying, “No, no.” But I kept sending the literature to them. Finally, they're like, “All right. You want to do it; you can do it.”

MG: How many other students were on board?

AM: I want to say there were two hundred or something if I had to guess. It was big.

MG: All college kids?

AM: Yes, it was all college kids, and then they had seasoned travelers that let adults go on if there was still room. They had to pay a lot more, but they would fill the boat with seasoned older people, which was nice. You had that mix of young and old on the boat.

MG: Was it a wild time?

AM: I didn't know anybody when I got on the boat. I made some good friends by the time we hit Spain, seven days crossing the ocean. We ended up traveling together, a core group of seven or eight of us that really bonded, and I'm still friends with to this day. But yes, it was party on the boat, but you had to also study. We had to learn the religion, the economics, the history, and the government, all the different aspects of every country before we got there. But it wasn't

work. It was exciting and interesting because we were going there, so I wanted to learn it all. I learned the art, the religion, the politics, the history, the social studies of the country. But then when we got off the boat, we didn't have any school work. We could do whatever we wanted. We could go anywhere we wanted. All we had to do was be back on that boat before it left, so you didn't miss the boat. [laughter] We would have a million really cool experiences.

MG: I bet. What an incredible opportunity.

AM: Yes, absolutely. I learned more – it really taught me so much. It made me appreciate home. Honestly, when I got back home, I had culture shock in America because we're so spoiled, and we have so much. It almost made me cry going to my big house with a garage and two cars and a refrigerator full of food. Just going to the grocery store and seeing all our options, it was really eye-opening.

MG: I bet. It sounds like an experience every young person should have.

AM: It really is because then you appreciate what you have, and you have more heart for other parts of the world. You notice that people are all the same everywhere and awesome. Ninety-nine percent of people are awesome. You can't judge a population by their government because none of us are our government, and most of us don't agree with our government all the time. Nobody all the time, but most people are like, "I don't agree with this or that or many, many things." But if you get a room full of people from different countries and they're just regular people, not politicians, we're so much alike. It's crazy. We all want a good life, fun, and food and health and families. Everybody's the same at the core pretty much.

MG: Yes. You mentioned that you've done a lot of traveling as an adult, and you've seen how other seaports and fisheries function in other countries.

AM: Yes, my last trip in 2012 overseas was Italy, and everybody raved about the food. They don't have anything on Gloucester. Let me tell you. We have the best food in the world, too. Their fish is all very small over there. You don't see any big fish. Everything is tiny. It doesn't taste the same. The quality is not the same at all. I really believe that you need cold water. The colder the water, the more minerals are in the water, the darker the water. That's where you get all your nutrition. Things that are nutritious taste better to you because that's our body telling us, "Eat more of this. Don't eat that." So, for the most part, unless it's full of sugar. You eat vegetables that taste good. They're better for you than vegetables that don't taste good, because your body needs those vitamins. You grow organic produce, and it's going to taste better than chemical produce because it's much more nutrient-dense, and it has the natural sugars. Same with the fish. The better the fish taste, it's because it's more nutrient-rich.

MG: I've also been wondering how fishermen in other countries are making a living and dealing with the government. Is there a model that we could emulate here?

AM: Well, it's international regulations. So the people that are making the rules all are talking with other countries. There's fishermen in Ireland protesting. It's not just a problem here. The fisheries are overregulated or misregulated everywhere, from things I've read in other places.

MG: Are there other seaports up and down the coast that folks in Gloucester are connected with?

AM: A little bit. We'd had a couple of protests in Washington, D.C. I went down for a couple of them. There were people from all over – Alaska, California, Florida. A lot of them know each other because a lot of fishermen do move around. There were mailing lists that grouped them all together but did not get any media attention.

MG: I wonder why. This is something that really impacts everyone along the supply and food chain. So why not pay attention to it?

AM: Well, I think they pay attention, but I think the media's bought and paid for also. [laughter]

MG: Did you want to say any more about changes in Gloucester and threats to its identity as a fishing community?

AM: Yes. Just the more it gets gentrified, the more they remove chunks of the DPA, the more they rezone things to allow non-conforming uses, the more trouble we're going to get into. They always say it's because we need more tax dollars, but our taxes go nothing but up, up, up because property values are going up because all these other people are moving in because of all these things they put here to supposedly save us tax dollars. [laughter] It has the opposite effect.

MG: What other pressures do you think the fishing industry is facing?

AM: Well, those are the big ones – the ocean warming, the government restrictions on the fishermen, and the nonconforming uses going in there, like windmills and pipelines and sand and gravel and rare and precious metals excavation. All that sort of stuff is messing with the ocean. Ninety-one, ninety-two percent of our seafood right now is imported. A lot of the government grants are going to aquaculture, which is unhealthy fish fed with antibiotics, and just doesn't have the nutritional value at all. Then there's other things that those farm fish can get out into the wild and mess with the wild fish. They've got GMO [genetically modified organism] salmon now. It's just crazy. [laughter] Nature did it perfect for us. Why mess with it and try to out-think it?

MG: Yes. Something else you mentioned earlier was that you have a seaweed line of fertilizer. What is that process like?

AM: Yes. So this is very sustainable. It all comes from the coast of New England. It's harvested off the rocks where it gets cut, not ripped off the rocks. Seaweed regrows. So say they start on one part of the coastline and they start harvesting it, going up the coastline, by the time they get to the top where they're going to finish, and they go back to the beginning where they started, it's regrown again. Seaweed has a lot of amino acids and trace minerals. It's really good for root development. It gives you some frost protection, some drought protection. It extends the shelf-life on produce. It does raise the sugar and nutritional value of food like fish does. That's really good for people, plants, and soil.

MG: I'm so impressed by your work. It seems like a win-win-win for the environment, for consumers and the people you employ.

AM: Yes. It sequesters carbon, so it actually can literally save the world. [laughter] You get fish fertilizer on people's fields and building that organic matter, you're going to start sequestering all that carbon as opposed to chemical fertilizer where it makes the soil dead, hard-packed. Then you have no water absorption, so you have flooding, way more flooding because the water doesn't seep into the soil anymore, and you don't get that carbon sequestering ability, and you have no nutrients in that soil. So you're giving it high NPK, and that's about it to make the plant grow, but there's no nutrition in the food anymore. All the pesticides and herbicides you have to use because you're growing weak food, and now look how bad cancer is. If we were still all growing organically and not putting all those chemicals on the field, I bet you any money we would not have nearly the cancer rates. Another little tidbit is the same companies that make the medicine are the same companies that make the fertilizer that poison us. Bayer, for example – Bayer aspirin. Bayer chemical fertilizer is in cahoots with Monsanto now. They make you sick, and then they give you the medicine to help you feel better. Not cure you because there's no money in that. It's a big racket.

MG: I also wanted to ask if the decline of the fishing industry here is impacting your business, your supply. Do you have enough?

AM: No, we've had waiting lists. Last year, we had a big waiting list. We've run out of product. We've had four, five, six-week lead times to get enough fish. It takes ten pounds of gurry, which is the fish remains, to make one gallon of fertilizer. So if you have five thousand pounds of gurry that you're processing, you're getting five hundred gallons of fertilizer. So it takes a lot of gurry to keep up with our demand. We put in four thirty-thousand gallon tanks. So now we have an extra 120,000 gallons of storage that we can stockpile all winter. That helps us with our spring rush. We've been forced to buy the gurry now too. When we started, it was a big problem to get rid of. People were paying to get rid of it, so they were thrilled to give it to us for free. Now, because there's such a smaller amount of gurry, and there's people that make pet food, and there's other fish fertilizer companies, there's a demand for the gurry now. We've been forced to pay quite a bit. Even if we're paying ten cents a pound, that adds a dollar to a gallon. That's another big hurdle. Our expenses are way up, and our production is down.

MG: That's frustrating. That happened because it became so useful and other people were interested.

AM: Yes. There's people making pet food out of it. And the bait. A lot of people need it for bait. Then there's other fertilizer companies popping up that are starting to buy it, take it. So it's become a commodity now, instead of just a waste product that people were thrilled to get rid of. People are selling it now. It just makes our prices go up and up, which is hard for farmers that are also struggling. That's our biggest hurdle, really, is keeping the price where we can make money, and people can afford to use it.

MG: Yes, I bet. I think I've gotten to the end of my questions, but is there anything I haven't asked you or I've forgotten to cover?

AM: I can't really think of anything. We have five kids in the family. All five of us work here. Most of our kids, and grandkids and cousins. I think that's pretty much it. I think we covered it.

MG: Do you anticipate that it will stay in the family?

AM: That's what we want, absolutely. I know my son's interested, so that's my goal. Keep expanding, coming on with new products to substitute the lack of fish. Help us with other products to sell different things that still work great, so it takes a little pressure off how much people have to use the straight fish. Just keep on growing. [laughter]

MG: Your mother, who I'm going to meet today, did she ever work here?

AM: Not really. I think she may have filled in, in the bookkeeping capacity, for a few days here and there maybe once in a while, but that's about it. No.

MG: Well, I want to thank you for your time. This has been a lot of fun, and also really interesting. Thank you.

AM: Yes, thank you. Appreciate it.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 12/13/2019

Reviewed by Ann Molloy 1/25/2020

Reviewed by Molly Graham 1/31/2020